

**AFRICAN UNION**

SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND  
RESEARCH COMMISSION



**UNION AFRICAINE**

COMMISSION SCIENTIFIQUE,  
TECHNIQUE ET DE LA RECHERCHE

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**First Conference of the African Scientific,  
Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC),  
27-29 November, 2018, Abuja, Nigeria**

**1<sup>st</sup> Congress Report  
(Launching of ASRIC)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of ASRIC meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria from the 27-29 November 2018 to launch and operationalize the ASRIC. Considering the eminent role that the ASRIC would play in research and innovation landscape of the continent, it will also serve as an implementation arm of the Decisions of the AU policy organs. Hence the congress is to set up the governance of ASRIC, which consists of a Congress Bureau; and a Secretariat with the view of mobilizing African research excellence; builds and sustains a continental research-policy nexus; as well and resources mobilization for research programmes.

It will further promote dialogue and voice of the scientific community; advocacy for knowledge and technology creation and acquisition; and link the scientific community with the productive sector. It will be instrumental in supporting and strengthening national and regional councils' STI capacities, bridging the gap between research and policy; and boosting intra-Africa and international collaboration in research and innovation.

## 2. ATTENDANCE

The following countries were represented at the Congress: **Nigeria, Kenya, Equatorial Guinee, Algeria, Morocco, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Cameroun, South Africa, Zambia, Namibia, Burundi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Madagascar, Malawi, Sao Tome and Principe, Egypt, Djibouti, Angola, Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Mauritania, Botswana, Togo and Mauritius.**

Nigeria,

The following regional institutes and development partners were represented at the Congress: **ECOWAS, FARA, UNECA, UNESCO, EU, IRD, University of Sussex UK, MINFI, MINESAT, MEEUD, KNAS, NASAC, UON-CASELAP, ASCAD CI, ARIPO, AAS, IMRMPS, NIPRD, RMAS, AFDB, IRD, CAFOR, CORAF, KALRO, EASTECO, MINESUP, PAUWES**

## 3. SESSION 1: OPENING

The Programme Director, **Dr Mahama Ouedraogo**, welcomed members to the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of ASRIC and briefed the gathering that the ASRIC will further strengthen the science and technology programme and activities in the continent and chats a new paradigm in the frontiers of science and technology.

Welcome Remarks was made by **H.E Prof. Leopoldo Amado**, Commissioner Education Science and Culture of ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Commissioner expressed her appreciation for having taken part in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of ASRIC. ECOWAS also recognized the importance of this platform for research and innovation particularly for the RECs. Therefore, ECOWAS wishes to participate to the success of this instrument by having an important and active role within the Bureau of the Congress for the

coming three (3) years. He further wished the congress a successful launch of the ASRIC.

Opening Remarks made by **Prof. Mosto Onuoha**, President Nigerian Academy of Science who welcomed the eminent scientist and other participants to the Congress and said that he is delighted that ASRIC Secretariat is hosted by Nigeria. He further stressed that all necessary support will be accorded to ASRIC and wished the participant successful deliberations.

Opening Remarks by **H.E Prof Sarah Anyang Agbor**, Commissioner HRST stated that today is a remarkable day in the annals of STI in the continent. Recalling that 38 years ago Lagos Plan of Action was launched here and today we are launching another mile stone ASRIC that will spearhead implementation of STI in the continent. She advised the eminent scientists that we all know that the solution to myraid of our challenges can only be solved through science and technology and STISA 2024 is of great guidance to us. She concluded that we can achieve the aspiration of Africa we want by having good policies, institutions and mechanisms and she wished the participants successful launch of ASRIC.

#### **4. SESSION 2: SETTING THE SCENE**

A keynote address was made by **Dr. Kasirim Nwuke**, Chief New Technologies and Innovation of UNECA on the role of STI in Africa's development focusing on Agenda 2063 and SDGs. He noted that though there has been enormous increases in global wealth at this period in human history, global GDP has expanded yet not much has changed in relative terms, except for China and a few South East countries. He mentioned in comparison to Africa. The growth has been along old trends lines, much of the growth continues to be concentrated in Europe and North America and in Asia. He emphasized that what separates Africa from the rest of the world can be found in the differences in the application of STI and the roles of scientists, technologists and innovators play in addressing and taming the challenges of their societies.

The representative of the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology **Mr Hambani Masheleni**, (Ag. Head of S&T Division) presented the STISA-2024 and put STISA within the context of ASRIC. He recalled the call of H.E Kwame Nkrumah, President of Republic of Ghana in 1960 on the capability of Science Technology to transform the continent. He stated that STISA -2024 calls for a stronger and sustainable research and development enterprise capable of translating scientific discoveries into products, services, and processes required for Africa's sustainable development and contributing to achieving the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Meeting Objectives and Expectations was presented by Programme Director, **Dr Mahama Ouedraogo** highlighting that the main objective is setting up the ASRIC Bureau and launch for it to be operational.

The Executive Director of AU-STRC **Dr. Ahmed Hamdy** made a presentation on the background how ASRIC was initiated to its Statute. He further presented the ASRIC Rules of Procedure.

The comments and questions that ensued after the presentation are;

The Rules of Procedure must have vision and mission of the ASRIC. The annual ASRIC Congress is financially cumbersome and the quorum for the Congress should be more than 15 Member States. Some participant made reservation on the tenure of the ASRIC Bureau of three years and requested for monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the Bureau. The Congress was informed that ASRIC should work with Member States networks, institutions and the Diaspora to get the best out of the existing initiatives.

In response; it was mentioned that the Working Groups and the Committees will develop the vision and mission of the ASRIC while the annual ASRIC Congress will continue as it is captured in the Statute of ASRIC. On the issue of the quorum it was stated that from experiences of other AU institutions 15 is an ideal number.

## **5. SESSION 3: ELECTION OF THE BUREAU**

**H.E Prof Sarah Anyang Agbor** Commissioner HRST called for a motion to move for the Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of ASRIC, subsequently Nigeria moved for the motion and seconded unanimously as amended.

The Election of the ASRIC Bureau. The Commissioner HRST presided over the election in which the regions 5 presented their candidates and results are as follows;

<b>S/No</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Country</b>
1.	Chair	Prof. Ratemo W. Michieka	East	Kenya
2.	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. James S. Phiri	South	Zambia
3.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. Mosto Onuoha	West	Nigeria
4.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. Driss Ouazar	North	Morocco
5.	4 <sup>th</sup> Vice Chair	Prof Beban Sammy Chumbow	Central	Cameroon

## **6. SESSION 5: Official Launch of ASRIC**

The Commissioner HRST, congratulated the successful Bureau Members and urge them to move forward the science and technology trend of the continent. She further stressed that the task given to the Members is cumbersome hence it needs dedication and commitment. As a pioneer executive of the ASRIC, the onus lies on the Members to build a robust institution and leave a lasting legacy for the younger ones to continue with.

The Commissioner HRST concluded that with the election and inauguration of the Bureau, the ASRIC is hereby launched.

The ASRIC Bureau Chair, Prof. Ratemo W. Michieka in his acceptance speech underscored that the Bureau Members were delighted for the confidence reposed on them by electing them to the positions. He stated that they will not disappoint the continent and promised to lay a solid foundation for ASRIC that will be reckoned as a force in science, technology and research in the continent and beyond.

## **7. SESSION 4: SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN AFRICA IN SUPPORT OF ASRIC- AU RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM**

The session was a panel discussion showcasing the success stories of the AU Research Grant (AURG) and the panelist are; Dr Chux Daniels Uzoka, SPRU, University of Sussex, UK; Dr. Monica Idinoba, Principal Policy Officer, HRST; Andrea CARIGNANI DI NOVOLI, Head of Unit, European Commission, Brussels; Dr Anselme Vodounhessi, Lead Specialist M & E, FARA, Accra, Ghana; Dr Kasirim Nwuke, Chief New Technologies and Innovation, UNECA; and Dr Salack Seyni, WASCAL.

The panel started with a video show that provided an in-depth overview of the AURG programme, highlighting the individual projects and activities, countries and regions impacted by the programme. The video presentation was followed by discussions by the panelists.

Comments questions and responses after the showcase;

What are the major challenges of research and key opportunities for increasing research funding in Africa? How can Africa overcome the challenges to science research and innovation funding and harness the opportunities that exist? What roles for (i) key actors and (ii) public policies in overcoming the challenges while also identifying and maximizing the opportunities for science , research and innovation funding in Africa?

AU, EU, and broader ecosystem stakeholders for research and actors in view of the AURG programme, is to promote greater working relationship among partners and networks, increase indigenous funding for the AURG, and strengthen the AURG and related programmes, through capacity building (e.g. in science, research and innovation), and provision of effective policies. The critical factors for succeeding as an AURG beneficiary, the key message is that mobility of researchers, access to essential infrastructure, capabilities, sustainability, and access to funding were outlined to be key. These factors also hold the key to improving opportunities for scale up, in cases where applicable.

## **8. SESSION 6: BREAKOUT SESSION ON PROGRAMMATIC CONTENT OF THE COMMITTEES**

The participants were grouped into three Working Groups in the form of Committees, Scientific and Innovation; Communication; and Resource Mobilizations to work on the Programmatic Content of the Committees while guiding questions were given to them as follows;

a. Scientific and Innovation Committee

1. What research and innovation can contribute to address the priorities of STISA-2024, to respond to Agenda 2063, and the science beyond?
  2. What are the gaps in research and innovation, and what interventions should be done?
  3. What should be done to build Africa's Research and innovation capacities in terms of (i) Scientific Infrastructure (ii) Technical and professional competencies (iii) Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship and (iv) creating an enabling STI environment?
- b. Communication
1. What are the communication or advocacy strategies/interventions to promote research and innovation in the continent?
  2. How do we attract the creation of partnership with private sectors, public private partnership?
- c. Resource Mobilization
1. What will be the resource mobilization strategy for research and innovation in Africa?
  2. How can we set up an African science and technology fund as a pan African financial instrument to support research and innovation?

Each Committee made their presentation to the Congress, the Scientific and Innovation Working Group made their presentation on the key priority areas of STISA 2024 in relation to the pillars. The Resource Mobilization Working Group made their presentation on the mobilization of financial and human resources to support research and STI programs in Africa in accordance with the STISA 2024 while the Communication Working Group made presentation on the Communication Strategy that will build/strengthen and sustain a continental research-policy nexus based on the activities of the two Committees aforementioned;

The discussion that ensued after the groups presentation are;

The congress applauded the thorough works of the groups. On the Committee on Scientific and Innovation; It was observed that there are several universities, institutions and networks working on the thematic of science and innovation and that ASRIC should build on it particularly the cross cutting issue hence, communication will play a key role in bridging the gaps. Continuous capacity building should be a critical component for development and encouraging younger ones to have career in science. It was also noted that wealth creation should be incorporated in every aspect of science and innovation but not as a stand alone.

The Congress was informed that the issue of intellectual property protection should be promoted and scientists should be enlightened to protect their inventions while encouraging uptake of research outcome by users.

On the Communication Committee; the Congress was informed that this Committee must work in close collaboration with all the Committees to achieve anything

meaningful. The communication strategy must build a constituency both within and outside ASRIC for dissemination of information. ASRIC should have its journal and other medium of communicating science, technology and education.

On the Resource Mobilization Committee; it was highlighted that the ASRIC must source and rely on domestic funding to implement its programme and projects rather than looking for external funding. ASRIC to further explore existing funds under EU-Africa, India-Africa, Japan- Africa, China-Africa among others. ASRIC can further explore from African Development Bank AfDB, Islamic Development Bank for investment in research and/or to have Trust Fund for research.

## **9. SESSION 7: BREAKOUT SESSION ON OPERATIONAL DETAILS OF THE COMMITTEES**

Working Groups in the form of Committees, Scientific and Innovation; Communication; and Resource Mobilizations to work on the operational details of the Committees while guiding questions were given to them as follows;

- a) What mode of operation will the committees adopt?
- b) How will the committees be sustained financially?
- c) What will be the size of the committee? How is the membership determined? and propose members to the committee.
- d) How will be the reporting of the committees be done

Each Committee made their presentation to the Congress on answering the guiding questions. The Committees' operational guidance are;

### **a) The mode of operation of the committees will be?**

- To work on the 6 subcommittees in order to align with the 6 STISA priority areas this is in the case of Scientific and Innovation Committee and 3 subcommittees each under Communication Committee and Resource Mobilization Committee. The subcommittees will be divided at the ground (in the countries/region) in task forces.
- The mandate of the committee is to organize, review and the assess research/activities and proposals and report and to advise the bureau of ASRIC on the Committee's that related to the Programme.

### **b) How will the committees be sustained financially?**

- By ASRIC

### **c) What will be the size of the subcommittees?**

- 12 persons per sub- taking into account the gender, the youth (e.g. representative of the Young Academy), the five regions of AU, and the African diaspora.

### **d) What will be the reporting nature of the Committees?**

- The subcommittees will report to the committee, who will report to the Bureau.
- They work as much as possible using virtual meeting, emails but also, physical meetings when necessary.

## **Statement by Partners on ASRIC**

**Dr Irene Annor- Fremphong**, Director of Research and Innovation FARA, Accra, Ghana, reiterated that FARA advances the development of Agriculture which is a STISA 2024 priority number one and Member States that signed the FARA Science Agenda will be brought to work with ASRIC. She further advised ASRIC to focus on research that solves the problems of our community and to adopt multistakeholder approach.

**Dr. Samuel Dotse**, AU ECOSSOC representative promised to popularize ASRIC within the Civil Society Organization in the continent.

**Dr. Jacqueline Olang**, Network of African Science Academies representation pledge to contribute their time and resource to ASRIC for it to realize the Africa we want.

**Mr. Sebastiano Germano**, Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union re-echoed the commitment of the EU to the AU and ASRIC, recollected the success achieved on the AU Research Grant. He promised that EU will assist the ASRIC on the areas of STI and the resource mobilization issues.

**Dr Kasirim Nwuke**, Chief New Technologies and Innovation, UNECA representation mentioned that ASRIC was conceptualized by the AUC and UNECA hence it is imperative for UNECA to support the ASRIC.

**Dr. Arona Diedhiou**, Director of Research, IRD stressed that ASRIC should look at scientific integration and IRD will support the role of ASRIC in the continent.

**Dr Chux Daniels Uzoka**, SPRU, University of Sussex, UK spoke as a representative of the Diaspora advised that Diaspora is a huge resource for ASRIC and there are many out there willing to contribute and ASRIC should devise a way to tap those resources.

The discussion that ensued after their statements are;

There is need for the EU-Delegation to link ASRIC to European Innovation Council and to include ASRIC in the science policy dialogue. It was also advised that ASRIC should coordinate all the existing initiatives on STI in the continent and also to give a role for for the Pan African Universities to play within the ASRIC. The AU Kwame Nkuruma laureates should also be allocated a task within the ASRIC for them to be utilized. The Diaspora to form a committee to see how they can work with the ASRIC.

## **10. SESSION 8: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME (ON THE AU LEVEL)**

HRST (Division of S&T) Programmes on STI was presented by **Mr. Hambani Masheleni** (Ag. Head of S&T) that were centred on Popularisation of STI in Africa that includes Promoting public understanding through debates on STISA-2024. While the rest of the activities are AU Research Grants Programme; EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue on STI; GMES & Africa Programme; and the Space Policy and Strategy.

The AU-STRC Programmes on STI presented by **Dr. Ahmed Hamdy** Executive Director, STRC mentioned their activities and programmes as; STISA-2024 Policy Analysis; African Union Network of Sciences (AUNS); Africa's STI Challenges and Climate Change; Mitigating the Impact of Natural Hazards in Africa Programme; Women Participation in Sciences Programme; STI for Youth Empowerment and Wealth Creation. While the programme on Africa Health Research Capacity Building has components like the AU-STRC-UNESCO-Merck Summit, African Liver Patients Association, and India Africa Health Cooperation. The second programme that has components is "Towards Strengthening and Establishment of African Societies in Scientific Fields and Practices" which has (a) Africa Environmental society (AES) (b) Federation of African Engineering Organization (FAEO) and (C) Egyptian Syndicate of Engineers

AOST Programmes on STI presented by **Dr. Philippe Mawoko** Executive Director, AOSTI highlighted the progress and challenges of AOSTI from inception to date and on the project implementations, he talked on Building STI capacities; Technology Forecasting and Prospecting; Developing and Managing STI Indicators; Strengthening National Innovation Systems; and Policy Studies; Policy Outreach and Advocacy.

African Panel on Emerging Technologies **Prof. Aggrey Ambali** Head, NISTIH, NEPAD made a presentation on how best the continent to benefit from emerging technologies for economic development and environmental sustainability. Where the first ten technologies selected are; Gene drives, Micro-grids, Drones, Precision Agriculture, Water Purification, Next generation medicines, Next generation batteries, 3D Printing, Synthetic biology, and Artificial intelligence. While the panel decided to explore the first set of three technologies:

- promoting micro-grids for expanding Africa's access to energy.
- application of drone technology for transforming Africa's agriculture.
- application of gene drives for malaria vector control and elimination.

### **Presentation of the Meeting Outcomes by the ASRIC Chair**

The first ASRIC Congress is a successful one and its success is because of you participants but the work lies ahead as this is the beginning of ASRIC. The Congress recommends the following;

1. APPRECIATES the host country for hosting ASRIC and the first Congress in Abuja, Nigeria;

2. FURTHER APPRECIATES and applaud the commitment and support of partners pledged for ASRIC;
3. WELCOME the support from partners and Member States for ASRIC
4. RECKONED the successful election of the ASRIC Bureau and the results are as follows;

S/No	Position	Candidate	Region	Country
1.	Chair	Prof. Ratemo W. Michieka	East	Kenya
2.	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. James S. Phiri	South	Zambia
3.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. Mosto Onuoha	West	Nigeria
4.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair	Prof. Driss Ouazar	North	Morocco
5.	4 <sup>th</sup> Vice Chair	Prof Beban Sammy Chumbow	Central	Cameroon

5. The Congress adopted the Rules of Procedure of ASRIC as amended;
6. The Working Groups worked on the Programmatic Contents of the Committees and further work need to be done to synthesize the work done;
7. The Working Groups further worked on the operationalization of the ASRIC which equally needs to be improved;
8. The Congress of ASRIC is launched and operations starts henceforth
9. NOTES the offers made by The Republic of Burundi and the Kingdom of Morocco to host the next ASRIC Congress but that is need to be confirmed after consultation with the relevant authorities however, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria made a confirmed offer to host. The Congress accepted the confirmed offer of Algeria to host the next ASRIC Congress.
10. The Congress scheduled the next ASRIC Congress for October, 2018 tentatively and dates to be communicated hereafter.

#### Closing Remarks

**Mr. Hambani Masheleni** (Ag. Head of S&T) on the behalf of the Commissioner HRST gave a closing remark by thanking the host country Nigeria, partners, and all the participants for making the first ASRIC Congress successful and further stated that the launch of ASRIC is just the beginning and the work lies ahead. He thanked the partners for the commitment pledged to ASRIC and assured them that ASRIC will play its role in shaping the STI in the continent. He concluded by wishing all the participants a safe journey back to their destinations.